

## **SUMMARY OF THE PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING FEBRUARY 9, 1999**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, February 9, 1999, at 1 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Anne Rhyne of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to review the committee's tasks after the Interim Meeting, and develop an action plan to achieve its goals.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Rhyne opened the meeting by informing participants that conference calls for the PT Committee have been scheduled for every other Tuesday (thru June 15, 1999). Some of these calls may be canceled if it is determined that they are not necessary.

### **NELAC IVI FOLLOWUP**

Following the Fourth NELAC Interim Meeting, held January 11-14, 1999, the committee identified several tasks requiring attention before the NELAC Annual Meeting. Each of these tasks is described below, along with committee action plans.

#### **Determine Date to Reopen Discussion of "State Selection of PT Providers"**

Ms. Rhyne said that the committee needs to review the comments received at the Interim Meeting when considering this issue. The committee agreed to schedule the discussion for the next conference call which is set for February 23, 1999. Ms. Rhyne set a goal for the committee to come to resolution on the issue at that time.

#### **Continue Development of New Appendices F, G, and H**

No written comments have been received for Appendices F, G, or H. Ms. Lara Autry said that Appendix H has been revised according to her own comments and she expects to have a new version complete by April 1, 1999. Ms. Rhyne reminded the committee that the deadline for receiving comments is March 29, 1999. Revised standards will probably need to be submitted approximately six weeks before the Annual Meeting (mid-May). Committee members will continue to develop the appendices in order to propose them for addition to Chapter 2 at NELAC V.

#### **Review NELAC Standards for Inconsistencies with Chapter 2**

Ms. Michelle Kropilak volunteered to review the entire NELAC standards for references to, and possible inconsistencies with, proficiency testing and/or Chapter 2. She expects to have this completed by March 23, 1999.

## **Provide Input for the NELAC Combined Glossary**

Ms. Barbara Burmeister attended a meeting of the Program Policy and Structure Committee to discuss the combined glossary which has been proposed for Chapter 1, Appendix A. Corrections and comments will be directed to Dr. Tom McAninch of that committee, who will compile glossary terms and then submit them to the committee's chair.

Ms. Burmeister has already identified some terms which need to be included in the glossary. Some of the terms are: PTOB (Proficiency Testing Oversight Board), PTPA (Proficiency Test Provider Accreditor), NIST, PT study provider, PT field of testing, interdependent analytes. She noted that, in some instances, she had difficulty differentiating which terms are appropriate for the NELAC combined glossary, and which are specific to the PT chapter. The glossary contains terms which are similar to those used in Chapter 2, but have different meaning. Committee members were asked to review Chapter 2, highlight any terms to include in the glossary, and send a list of these terms to Ms. Burmeister. She will then compile a list for the committee and send the glossary terms to Dr. McAninch.

## **EPA/NIST ITEMS**

### **Develop Solid Waste Criteria Document for NIST**

Solid waste has been identified as the next category to be developed for inclusion in Chapter 2. The committee will be working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to accomplish this.

### **Sample Composition and Zero or Non-detect Values**

During the teleconference on January 5, 1999 (discussion of September 3, 1998 Federal Register notice), the committee discussed with Mr. Bob Graves whether to include his proposal regarding sample composition and zero or non-detect values in Chapter 2, and where the appropriate place would be.

Although Appendix C of Chapter 2 does contain some language regarding zero values, it only relates to scoring. Committee members agreed that they need to add language to define the minimum number of analytes to be included in a PT sample, and the total number allowed.

A final version of the EPA "National Standards for Water Proficiency Testing Studies - Criteria Document" (dated December 30, 1998) was sent to Ms. Rhyne on January 5, 1999. Ms. Rhyne sent copies of these to members of the committee. These standards contain language which defines rules to be followed when producing PT samples containing compounds regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act. Ms. Rhyne will review this language and draft text to be added to Section C.5.1. She will distribute this to the committee, and it will be presented during the next meeting.

## **Expansion of PT Program to Include Solid Waste**

Mr. Barry Lesnik from the EPA OSWER participated in the conference call to discuss the expansion of the NELAC PT program to include solid waste. The solid waste program differs from the water program, which is the basis for the current NELAC PT standards. One key difference is that the use of appropriate test methods is critical for solid waste. Standards for solid waste should be more systematic and less specific than the standards for water and therefore, flexibility is important.

It was noted that providers will need to demonstrate that they are capable of producing a material for which they can ascertain 100% concentration of the analytes contained in the sample. Matrices must be meaningful as well as homogeneous and stable. The provider must also be able to document their ability to evaluate performance against the 100 percent value in order to generate acceptance limits.

In order to identify and discuss these kinds of issues, the formation of a subcommittee/workgroup was suggested, per a request from Mr. Barnes Johnson of the EPA OSWER. The formation of a Solid Waste Subcommittee was agreed upon and will include representatives from the PT Committee (Mr. Matt Caruso - Chair, Mr. Chuck Wibby, and Mr. Tom Coyner), EPA (Mr. Barry Lesnik and Ms. Kim Kirkland), and NIST (Ms. Reenie Parris). Other contributors from the EPA may include Mr. Barnes Johnson, Ms. Gail Hansen, Mr. Charles Sellers, and Mr. Ollie Fordham. Mr. Caruso will be responsible for scheduling the meetings for the subcommittee.

The question was asked about the possibility of EPA providing funding to assist the NIST program expand into solid waste. Mr. Lesnik replied that it will not be possible during this fiscal year, due to budget constraints. He explained that the methods group budget was cut by approximately 70 percent. However, if multiple sponsors can be found, the expansion is possible. He also suggested that if they can generate a demand for the solid waste program, NIST will have more incentive to invest in the development of Standard Reference Methods (SRMs) for solid waste. He suggested that the subcommittee take a look at what SRMs NIST already has available and what other groups outside the United States may have available. It was noted that the International Atomic Energy Commission has already done this, and they have information on their Website.

## **NIST UPDATE**

Ms. Parris was not available to provide an update on NIST activities. It was noted that NIST is in the process of scheduling for the March assessments, and that the NVLAP Provider Accreditation program seems to be on track.

## **CONCLUSION**

The next committee teleconference is scheduled for February 23, 1999.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**FEBRUARY 9, 1999**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Ms. Rhyne will draft language for Section C.5.1 to define the minimum number of analytes to be included in a PT sample, and the total number allowed.	3/19/99
2.	PT Committee members will review the chapter and compile lists of terms to include in the NELAC Combined Glossary. Ms. Barbara Burmeister will compile these terms and send them to Dr. Tom McAninch.	3/5/99 for committee to submit to Ms. Burmeister. 3/19/99 for Ms. Burmeister to submit to Dr. McAninch.
3.	Ms. Kropilak will review all the chapters of the NELAC standards for references to proficiency testing, and any possible inconsistencies.	3/23/99
4.	Mr. Caruso will schedule a meeting for the Solid Waste Subcommittee.	TBA

**PARTICIPANTS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
FEBRUARY 9, 1999**

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